CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

Edited by
THE NORTHERN ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE
Sigtuna, Sweden

Director: Dr. HARRY JOHANSSON, Sigtuna, Sweden
Editor: Rev. JOHS. LANGHOFF, Øster Egesborg per Mern, Denmark

No. 35 28th February, 1958.

The Northern Bishops Appeal to the Hungarian Government.

The leading bishops in the National Churches of the Northern countries have sent a joint appeal to the Hungarian Government regarding the fate of the Bishops Ordass and Turoczy. The letter was sent already on January 14th, but was only published sometime in February. It is signed by Archbishop Yngve Brilioth, Sweden, Archbishop Ilmari Salomies, Finland, Bishop H. Fuglsang-Damgaard, Denmark, and Bishop Johannes Smemo, Norway. The appeal which is addressed to President János Horvath, leader of the Hungarian Government's Office for Church Affairs runs as follows:

"The Northern Churches were very happy to note the attitude of impartial interest evinced by the Hungarian Government towards the country's Lutheran Church after 1956. It seemed particularly significant that, in accordance with the law, the Church was given back its two elected leaders, the Bishops Ordass and Turoczy, both of them Christian men whose work in the evangelical church has been highly appreciated. We feel convinced, moreover, that this church policy has contributed considerably to the increasing respect for the determination of the Hungarian People's Democracy to safeguard the high principle of religious freedom.

We were, therefore, so much the more dismayed and worried at the news reaching us quite recently. According to this information Bishop Ordass is said to have been deprived of his position as leading bishop. Of Bishop Turoczy it is said that he has been removed from office although the legitimacy of his taking over office was acknowledged by the Government by the presence of its representative at his official reinstalment in office. New measures are even expected, aiming at further changes in the leadership of the Church.

We hope that the reports about such serious encroachments on the spiritual freedom of the Church are exaggerated and, if so, we should be grateful to receive information to this effect. Should it not be the case, however, we wish to express our most sincere apprehensions. Through close contact with the two church leaders mentioned we have become convinced that not only are they personalities of high spiritual quality, but also good and loyal citizen of their country.

Knowing your previous efforts at preserving religious freedom in Hungary, not the least in regard to the Lutheran Church, we

should like to ask you, Mr. President, to do everything in your power so that this Church may also in the future enjoy its spiritual freedom unimpaired.

Perhaps it may seem unwarranted to you that representatives of other churches interfere in a conflict which may seem to be of an internal nature. We would like to point out, however, that this is a matter in which the evangelical churches feel at one beyond national and geographical borders. For this reason we cannot remain indifferent when the question involves the possibilities for our sister church to develop freely her spiritual and organizational activities."

The communication concludes with respectful greetings and hearty wishes for peace and prosperity for the sorely tried Hungarian people.

President Horvath Answers the Northern Bishops.

In a communication dated February 1st, the leader of the Hungarian Government's Office for Church Affairs President János Horvath has replied to the appeal from the Northern Bishops. After a short introduction it runs as follows:

"You are quite right in saying in the last paragraph in your letter that it may seem to us an unwarranted interference. What happens in the Hungarian Lutheran Church, between the Hungarian Lutheran Church and the State in particular, is an absolutely internal concern of the Hungarian Lutheran Church, a concern of Hungary. Nevertheless, I should like to make a few remarks.

1. It is a fact that the relations between the State and a few of the leaders of the Lutheran Church have deteriorated in the course of the last few months. The reason was that certain leaders of the Church have consented to the agreement between the State and the Church to preach the law of the Church, but have not acted accordingly in deeds. These church leaders, finally, have come in opposition to the Church, to the majority of the clergy and to most of the believers, and it is the relationship between these leaders and the Church which deteriorated in the first place. The divergencies between the State and the Church arose only after this disagreement.

The removal from office of Bishop Turoczy is likewise a result of the stiff-necked attitude of these selfish ecclesiastics who in no way advance the true interests of the Church and who stubbornly refrain from any kind of constructive solution whatsoever. Bishop Ordass and a few of his associates have made impossible the adjustment of several important matters as well as of the position of Bishop Turoczy. As it is, Bishop Turoczy has been put on the retired list, is living at his former residence and receives a pension from the State.

In the course of the last few weeks the situation has improved considerably and become more settled which is also evident from the fact that the State has added an extra grant to the subsidy allowed the Lutheran pastors according to the Agreement.

2. At the end of your letter you make the request that the Church should be allowed to settle her own affairs of organization freely, by which you in this case refer to, if I understand you correctly, the state of the two bishops. In Hungary a positively inclined legislation guarantees in advance the Government's approval of any nomination to the episcopal offices while in your countries, as far as we know, the King or the Minister of Church Affairs appoints the bishops at will. I say "at will" as we have just recently received information from Norway that the Minister of Church Affairs has appointed Mr. Støylen bishop although he was No. 5 on the list of candidates as the first four candidates did not appeal to the Minister. I might refer to England as well as many other capitalistic countries in which the State interferes in the fate of the ecclesiastical offices to a far greater extent, but I shall contend myself with referring to the Professor in Theology in Basel, Karl Barth, who is acknowledged by the Protestant Church all over the world as an outstanding theological scholar. In a letter to the "Basler Nachrichten" in 1949 Karl Barth writes: "That it should be possible to fill the high ecclesiastical offices, provided only the sanction of the Government, is a unification equally true of communistic Hungary as well as of democratic England. And has not the Austrian imperial, the French royal and imperial and the Spanish royal regimes taken a rather active part in the election of a pope even?"

3. Finally, as far as the statements by the Lutheran World Federation and a few foreign church papers and church leaders are concerned, I only want to say so much that they widely overstep the boundaries where their interest may be said to be benevolent. They seem to believe that they may bring pressure to bear upon our Government or on the liberal minded ecclesiastic personages through the various declarations in the press and the radio - behind which the political aims and endeavours may be recognized - and thus unwarranted meddle in the specific problems of the Church, a goal which they will not be able to achieve in Hungary, but only possibly further unmask the policy to which they adhere."

DENMARK

86-years Old Danish Missionary Wants to Stay On in China.

In a letter to the Danish Missionary Society the 86-years old Danish missionary Ellen Nielsen has stated that she wishes to stay on in China until she - as she puts it - 'sets out on the long journey'.

Miss Ellen Nielsen is the only Danish missionary still in China. She has worked there since 1899 and for many years she was the leader of the girls' school and women's training college in Takushan. Before the communists took over power she had obtained Chinese citizenship and has shared the changing fate and circumstances of the Chinese people. During the last few years she has been failing in health, amongst other things, her sight is giving way, but she is still of sound mind and in numerous letters to friends in Denmark she tells about her own circumstances and those of her Chinese friends.

A short while ago the Danish Missionary Society wrote to her that if she wanted it they would send a representative to China to accompany her home to Denmark. Her letter is a reply to this offer and Ellen Nielsen thanks the Executive Committee for their concern for her, but she prefers to stay where she is. However, she adds, if conditions should change in such a way that it seems best for her to leave the country, she will be ready.

Evangelist in the Sudan Sentenced for Having Offended the Moslems.

An evangelist on the Danish mission field in the Sudan, Andarawus, has been sentenced to six months' imprisonment and a fine of 500 Danish crowns for having offended the Moslems by delivering a sermon on the words of Jesus: 'No one cometh to the Father except by me'. The evangelist maintains that he has not said anything hostile to the Moslem faith and has appealed his case to the Emir.

Three African pastors, Shall, Holma and Simon and one of the oldest members of the church, Cornelius, were imprisoned at the same time as Andawarus, but were all acquitted and have now sued the Kilba chief for attempting to slander their good names and reputation and for ill-treatment in prison.

In Danish mission circles the matter has aroused great attention and further developments are being closely watched. The U.N. Commission for the Rights of Minorities were visiting in the Sudan at the time of the incident and in Christian quarters it is hoped that their visit may contribute to a better safe-guarding of religious freedom and public security.

Joy Over Decision in Ghana.

In a leading article the Danish "Kristeligt Dagblad" greets with acclamation the news of the decision of the International Missionary Council at its meeting in Ghana to integrate with the World Council of Churches. The decision is interpreted as a consequence of the realization that church and mission are inextricably bound up with one another. The paper mentions the misgivings concerning the plans for integration put forward in Norway and Sweden and the danger of the Norwegian Missionary Council withdrawing from the International Missionary Council, but does not feel that this should be allowed to influence the attitude of the Danish Church. "Kristeligt Dagblad" expresses the wish that the integration will not cause too much disruption and that it may be realized in Norway and Sweden that it is a very doubtful matter to withdraw at this point. "No violence is being done to the individual church or its conception of the Gospel", the paper writes.

"The Time of the National Church Not Yet Over".

In an article in the Norwegian periodical "Kirke og Kultur" the Danish Professor in Theology Dr. Regin Prenter deals with the question whether it is still justified to maintain the Lutheran Church as a national church. He gives the following answer to the question:

"I do not believe that the time of the National Church is over yet. I believe that it still possesses great unutilized resources for giving the congregation the best possible living conditions. But I believe that these possibilities can be utilized only under two conditions:

1) That the lay constituency accepts the challenge for voluntary responsibilities and activity to a degree inspired by the example of the Free Churches. No fear of organization or church constitution has any right to act as a hindrance for increasing the demand for greater responsibility and activity on the part of those who want to belong to the National Church voluntarily.

2) That we vigilantly and realistically assess the nation's voluntary reaction to the service of the National Church so that we are prepared, when the day comes - not one day sooner, nor one day later - to relinquish the position and privileges of a National Church because she has lost the goodwill of the nation, whether through withdrawals from the Church or through the even more dangerous means: by turning the National Church into a false church.

Keeping these two conditions in mind we may continue in the National Church happy and with a good conscience, confidently believing that it stands a good chance of winning over, on a voluntary basis, the people who formerly had to be kept forcefully to the true faith by the power of an autocratic king.

For the fact is that the National Church which we were given when the state church disappeared was a true free church of the nation and therefore not so much of a reality as of a possibility, not so much of a guarantee as of a challenge, not so much of a possession as of an expectation. This is what it still is."

"Unfair Treatment of the Church in Greenland".

The new Member for Greenland in the Danish Parliament, Rev. Elias Lauf, has caused attention by bringing a serious charge against the licensing authorities for "unfair treatment" of the church in Greenland in comparison with other institutions there. In an interview in "Kristeligt Dagblad" he explains his statements in further detail:

Countless numbers of applications for grants for new buildings, extentions, restaurations and modernizations in the religious field have been turned down during the last few year, Rev. E. Lauf says. Both in the "colonies" (the larger built-up areas) and in the "out-posts" the church buildings are too small in many places due to the increase in population. There is room only for less than 10% of the inhabitants and, since the Greenlanders are diligent church-goers, the lack of accommodation is keenly felt. Many school premises used as chapels in the "out-posts" are both too small and in need of repairs, but the authorities concerned refuse the applications for the necessary funds. Also the church yards are in serious need of restauration and the means for it ought to be provided.

Rev. Elias Lauf also mentions the serious shortage of clergymen in Greenland which has resulted in a deplorable system of employing substitutes in order to be able to solve the problems even to a limited degree.

News in Brief.

- Plans are being discussed for dividing into two the largest of the dioceses in the Danish Lutheran National Church, viz. the Diocese of Copenhagen, before the next episcopal election which is to take place in another two years' time when Bishop H. Fuglsang-Damgaard turns 70 and must retire on account of age. The suggestion has been received with approval by almost all church circles. At the moment almost one fourth of the population of Denmark live in the Diocese of Copenhagen and its bishop is also the superintendent of the Danish congregations abroad besides being the intermediary between the Ministry of Church Affairs and the bishops.

- The Joint Council of Danish Students have sent a note of protest to the East German government against the sentence passed on the student minister in Leipzig, Siegfried Schmutzler.

FINLAND

First Extensive Evangelization Campaign in Finland.

Five Swedish speaking congregations in Helsinki (Helsingfors) and the Swedes in three bi-lingual parishes in the suburbs of Helsinki (Helsingfors) have carried out the first extensive evangelization campaign in Finland from February 18th - 23rd, on the pattern of similar drives in the U.S.A., Germany and Norway. Actually the Swedish congregations in Helsinki (Helsingfors) number more than 70.000 members, but only 2-3% of them go to church regularly and some 80% never attend church even once during the year. It is true that the church is in contact with them through christenings, confirmations, weddings and funerals as well as, in some places, through the work among children and young people, but of course it would be desirable to reach them more directly with the Gospel. This is the underlying reason for the evangelization campaign which was conducted under the motto "Christ is the Way". Several hundred laymen volunteered to visit the homes with invitations. They have been trained for this service during four evenings in January. The campaign proper was planned by six groups of altogether 140 members who dealt with prayer, preaching, house visiting, meetings, advertising and finances respectively. The campaign met the eye of the public through advertisements in buses, tramcars and cinemas as well as on advertising pillars.

A similar drive will be conducted by the Finnish speaking parishes in Helsinki (Helsingfors) in the autumn.

The Finnish Clergy Down Through the Ages.

During the last 200 years the number of clergymen in the Lutheran National Church of Finland has been doubled and during the last 40 years alone it has been increased by 50%, it was stated in an address by Professor Erkki Kansanaho on the occasion of the 40 years' anniversary of the Clergymen's Association recently.

Towards the end of the 17th century there were 740 clergymen in Finland; a hundred years later there were 845, and at the end

of the 19th century 935. Shortly after Finland became independent in 1917 the number had reached more than 1.000 and to-day it lies around 1.570. During the past few years there has been a decrease in the number of divinity graduates. During the 1930'ies the average annual number was 57 and for the last 7 years it has been 36. It is furthermore characteristic of the great importance achieved by the voluntary church and religious organizations in the church life of Finland that while only 75 clergymen were engaged in work outside the National Church in 1918, there are now app. 500.

The anniversary of the Clergymen's Association was celebrated January 29th - 31st by a number of special lectures delivered by prominent Finnish and foreign theological scholars. From the other Northern countries came Bishop Arne Fjellby, Trondheim, Professor Harald Riesenfeld, Uppsala, and Professor N.H. Søe, Copenhagen. The Clergymen's Associations in the other Northern countries were also represented at the anniversary celebrations.

Non-Theologians as Ministers in the Lutheran National Church?

The Finland-Swedish weekly "Församlingsbladet" has proposed that non-theologians should be allowed to hold office in the Lutheran National Church. The proposal is occasioned by the fact that at the Church Assembly next autumn a bill stipulating the qualifications required in order that a minister from another denomination may hold office in the National Church will be discussed.

"Församlingsbladet" feels that it would be of great importance both in alleviating the present shortage of clergymen and also to the work of the Church on the whole if access to clerical offices were given also to men with less training, but with greater experience in various fields of work.

In this connection it is suggested that people with other academical degrees should be allowed, after having passed a shorter theological course of instruction, to apply for vacancies in the Church, and that the same facilities should be accorded to laymen who have been in charge of religious work among children and young people for a number of years. The standard of clergymen would hardly be lowered by carrying out this proposal in actual life, the paper feels, but rather would it make it possible for the Church to fulfill its obligations in a more versatile and efficient manner than hitherto.

Appeals Made to the Political Parties for More Objective Co-operation.

Church circles have appealed to the political parties in Finland to go in for objective co-operation on a larger scale than hitherto in order to solve the great economic difficulties of the country rather than working exclusively for their own benefit.

The Finland-Swedish weekly "Församlingsbladet" advances these points of view in a leading article in which it refers to the President's appeal in his New Year's address for better understanding and co-operation. It is admitted that the approaching general election makes it difficult for the various parties to put the main emphasis on the welfare of the society as a whole, but at the same time the political parties are strongly criticized - with particular reference to their electioneering campaigns - for not trust-

ing the constituents with a real feeling of responsibility for the problems of the country, and for appealing to them to fight for their own personal rights and advantages instead.

"Församlingsbladet" is convinced that the parties would gain greater confidence in the population if they made determined and impartial efforts at overcoming the crisis and, during the electioneering campaign, appealed to the feeling of responsibility of the constituency rather than to their selfishness.

The Increase in Population in the Towns Charges the Church With New Responsibilities.

Only 10 years ago no more than 29% of the population of Finland lived in the towns, while the figure is now 37%. Last year alone the population in the towns was increased by 40.000 inhabitants while the increase in population in the country parishes amounted to only 2.000. Moreover, several larger built-up areas have sprung up in the country. At the same time the cultural pattern typical of by far the greater majority of the population of the country is undergoing sweeping changes due to the ever increasing influx of labour being drawn to the towns by industry.

This development charges the Church with great new responsibilities, not the least in the towns, and at the same time the large number of children born during the first five years after the War places great demands on the work in Sunday schools and among young people and calls for extensions. During 1945-1950 100.000 children were born in Finland while the corresponding number for 1935-1940 was 72.000.

News in Brief.

- Gamla Karleby church was ravaged by fire on the Day of Epiphany. The damage caused amounted to 100 million Finnish marks, and among the furnishings ruined were a 40-stop organ, the altar-piece and baroque chandeliers.

- A summer camp for boy scouts will be held from June 18th - 27th near Hangö. The camp area covers 40 hectares and 3-4.000 boys are expected to take part in the camp, among them almost 1.000 boys from abroad.

- A conference aiming at furthering the contacts between clergymen and instructors in religion as well as Heads of the Swedish schools in Finland was held at Porvoo (Borgå) on February 9th. Among the subjects discussed were morning prayers in the schools and the duties of the clergymen working among school youth.

ICELAND

Big Votive Offerings for Icelandic Church.

A public survey states that the churches in Iceland own a fortune totalling 3,2 million Icelandic crowns. Of this amount the Strandarkirkja alone on the south coast owns 2,3 million crowns. The reason for this unusual wealth is a century old tradition that the church from ancient times has been regarded as a votive church. If, for instance, a man is about to start on a dangerous journey, he promises a certain donation to the Strandarkirkja on his safe return from the journey or, in case of illness, he makes a similar promise of a gift on his recovery. This custom is still in force and during 1956 alone the Strandarkirkja received no less than 360.000 crowns on this account.

NORWAY

The Christian Organizations Include 35.000 Associations.

The Norwegian Church Year Book for 1958 gives a number of interesting figures illustrating the church life during 1956-1957. From this it appears that the number of communicants in the Lutheran National Church rose from 568.000 the previous year to 598.000 and the collections rose from 4,5 million Norwegian crowns to 5,4 million. The number of civil marriages fell from 4.300 to 4.200.

A survey of the larger voluntary Christian organizations show that altogether they count 28.200 local associations, and if the smaller organizations are also included, the figure will probably rise to almost 35.000. The largest of the voluntary organizations is the Mission Society with 7.700 associations and the Norwegian Lutheran Mission with 4.000. The bigger organizations together employ 1.600 permanent staff members and it may be noted in comparison that the National Church employs around 1.000 clergymen in active service. The income of the organizations amounts to more than 20 million crowns and their publications total a circulation of app. 400.000 copies.

An investigation of the Sunday school activities carried out by the Christian daily newspaper in Oslo "Vårt Land" shows that around 272.000 children attend Sunday school. They are taught by 14.000 men and women teachers. 183.000 of the children attend the Sunday schools of the National Church, which employs 9.000 teachers, and the rest are divided among various Free Church Sunday schools.

Norway has a population of app. 3 1/2 mill. inhabitants.

No Right of Voting for Women in the Norwegian Lutheran Mission.

At a council meeting in January the Norwegian Lutheran Mission - one of the largest Christian voluntary organizations in the Lutheran National Church - decided not to give women the right of voting at the General Assembly. The decision was reached after a

long debate and in spite of the fact that the majority of the Committee set up to consider the matter had been in favour of giving women the vote. The 60-70 members present at the council meeting were all men. - The matter which has been discussed heatedly for several years will now be taken up for consideration by the Central Board, but it is uncertain whether it will be put on the agenda for the General Assembly this summer.

The Norwegian Lutheran Mission is actively engaged in both home and foreign mission work.

Continued Debate on the "Tolerant Church".

Bishop Ragnvald Indrebø's New Year's address (see CH No. 54) in which he said that a separation between Church and State must be foreseen if the State would not acknowledge the Church as a confessional church, but demanded of her a tolerance which she could not give, has resulted in a lively discussion.

The Social Democratic Government paper "Arbeiderbladet" does not feel that the demand for tolerance should be embarassing to the Church unless, of course, "the word tolerance, forbearance, is considered a term of abuse", as it says in the article. The Christian daily in Oslo "Vårt Land" replies that tolerance is a fine word, but that it is sometimes mistaken for a demand on the Church to regard her Message as being of a relative nature so that pressure may be brought to bear on the Church to accept within her confines even serious deviations from the Confession, and that, in such a case, the Church must have the right to safeguard her own point of view in the same way that a political party opposes other opinions than its own.

"Morgenbladet" does not feel that the State so far has encroached upon the Church. The paper believes that a breach between the State and the Church would lead to complete chaos in the Church for the next 50 years at least and probably result in three different churches instead of the present National Church. The paper describes the attitude of prominent church leaders who advocate a separation between State and Church as irresponsible. "Vårt Land" replies by mentioning a number of instances in recent years where it is felt that the State has attempted deliberately to weaken the influence of the Church, and draws particular attention to the Royal Resolution of February 1954 which established that Bishop Sonjeberup had not placed himself beyond the fellowship of the National Church by his dissenting views on perdition (it may be remembered that the Bishop does not believe perdition to be eternal suffering).

Campaign to be Started Next Month for Increased Church Attendance.

Next month a campaign for increased church attendance will be launched in large sections of the Norwegian Lutheran National Church. The originators of the campaign are the members of the Commission set up in the autumn of 1955 by the Diocesan Councils' Joint Committee which was to "draw up a nation-wide plan for strengthening the position of church services in our people". In 1956 the Commission carried out an extensive counting of church attendance (see CH No. 30) and has spent last year in preparing for the forthcoming campaign.

A special pamphlet has been printed dealing with the importance of going to church for both the individual and the community. "The empty stalls paralyse and are a bad example to others", it says and many good tips are given on quite practical measures aiming at increasing church attendance, gathered from parish councils all over the country. The percentage of people going to church is only 2.7 although there is room for 18% of the Norwegian population if all the churches were filled to capacity. Two posters have been produced for use in the various congregations during the campaign.

The plan now for March is to concentrate on persuading all actively engaged Christian workers to go to church regularly and later, in the autumn, to extend the appeals to larger circles.

Christian Neurological Sanatorium Opened in Modum.

The first neurological sanatorium under Christian management in Norway was opened recently in Modum. Among those present at the opening function was the Bishop of Oslo, the Rt. Rev. Johannes Smemo. The sanatorium has cost 4 million Norwegian crowns, of which the 2,2 million have been collected by church circles. The sanatorium is intended primarily for treatment of nervous diseases, but in special cases alcoholics and narcomans may also be admitted.

New Independent International Missionary Council After the Decision in Ghana?

The Chairman of the Norwegian Missionary Council Secretary General Tormod Vågen, in a statement to the Christian daily in Bergen "Dagen" says that he expects that a proposal will now be put forward for establishing a new, independent missionary council, consisting of the missionary and church councils which opposed the integration of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council at the meeting in Ghana. The Secretary General feels certain that the Norwegian Missionary Council will withdraw from the International Missionary Council in case the integration is actually carried out, something which he is in no doubt will happen. "These people will not rest. The oecumenical spirit is so strong at present that it resembles a kind of obsession. All considerations are cast aside for this one end - to merge everything together", he concludes.

In a leading article on the matter "Dagen" writes that the decision in Ghana "was surely one of the most fatal in the history of the International Missionary Council". The international co-operation will be disrupted, the paper fears. It must be expected that, as far as the Norwegian Missionary Council is concerned, it will mean a withdrawal from the International Missionary Council and that the basis for collaboration with other mission societies must be altered, at least in respect of organization.

Government Wants to Remove Pastors and Teachers from School Administration.

The Norwegian Government has drawn up the draft bill for a new elementary education act giving, among other things, new rules for the composition of the local school boards of directors. The important change is that neither the vicar, nor a representative of the teachers or of the municipal council are to be regular members

of the school boards. Ministers and teachers are allowed, it is true, to give their opinion in matters touching upon their fields of work and may demand to have additions to the minutes put on record, but they will have no right of voting.

From many sides the bill has been met with opposition, not the least from church quarters. It is pointed out that since the school, in accordance with its objects clause, is still to give the children a Christian and ethical education, the natural consequence must be that the clergymen, as representatives of the church, are regular members of the school boards of directors. A number of statements by church members go in for letting both teachers and representatives of the municipal councils remain on the boards of directors and warn against allowing these to be composed along purely political lines as this would be detrimental to the impartial administration of the schools.

Attacks on the Church for Giving Aid to Arab Refugees.

Rev. Per Faye Hansen, minister to seamen in Haifa, at a meeting in Oslo recently sharply attacked the Christian relief organizations which by their work among the Arab refugees are contributing, together with the U.N. "to preserve the evil instead of wiping it out ...." He maintained that the Arab states sabotage all attempts at solving the problem of the refugees because they find it profitable to be able to use refugees as chess men in their political game.

In a statement to the press the leader of the Inter-Church Aid of Norway, Rev. Olav Egeland, replied that it was quite simply a Christian duty to help where there is such an appalling need as among the Arab refugees, quite apart from the question whether one is in absolute disagreement with the Arabs or not. To this Rev. Faye Hansen answered, in article going more in detail into the matter: "No one wants the aid rendered to discontinue suddenly, but a definite solution to the problem is better than permanent philanthropy which breeds apathy and desperation and prepares the soil for more and more hate. In her philanthropic eagerness the Church must not forget her responsibility towards justice.... Should not the Church be the ready conscience of the State and the states?"

News in Brief.

- The municipal board in Oslo has decided to establish four new parishes in the suburbs of Oslo: Oppsal, Manglerud, Tonsen and Lambertseter. The plans for new churches in the parishes of Tonsen and Oppsal have already been approved.

- The Secretary Hans Lindal has produced a 16 mm film, playing for about one hour, which gives the story of the life of the well-known lay preacher Hans Nielsen Hauge. The film opened in Oslo last month.

SWEDEN

he Bill Concerning 'omen Pastors.

The Conservative Party has proposed in Parliament that the eading of the Bill introduced by Government regarding the autho- ization of women to hold office in the Swedish Lutheran National hurch be postponed until next year in order to give the leaders of he Church time to reconsider their stand. This proposal is in ccordance with the wishes repeatedly expressed by church circles ince the time of the Church Assembly last autumn, but already for 'ormal reasons the proposal cannot be carried.

Since their meeting in January the bishops have requested 40 ifferent church and secular organs and associations to state their iews on the matter before April 1st. These statements will be exa- ined by a committee and the question thereupon be taken up for de- iberation at the Bishops' Conference in June.

ommission Appointed to Investigate the Relationship Between State nd Church.

The Minister of Church Affairs Ragnar Edman has now appointed commission which is to work out an unbiased resolution on the elationship between the State and the Lutheran National Church. The commission is composed of five experts: a lawyer, the President of an Appellate Court, Ivar Vieslander (chairman); a secretary of the Labour Union, Bertil Bolin; a theologian, Dr. Ruben Josefson, who is the editor of the weekly "Svensk Kyrkotidning"; Rev. Ake Set- terberg, Rector and Chairman of the Christian Social Democrats' Association; and Olof Engstrom, secondary school teacher and former Secretary of the Joint Committee of the Free Churches.

The decision about setting up such a commission was taken by Parliament as early as in 1956. The idea is that the commission is to do its work, having neither the possibility of a separation between State and Church nor of a continued mutual connection in mind, but that it should investigate certain problems connected with the matter in a completely unbiased frame of mind.

Swedish Comments on the Decision in Ghana.

In "Morgon-Bladet" a number of church leaders connected with foreign mission work have commented on the decision taken at the meeting of the International Missionary Council in Ghana about its integration with the World Council of Churches. It may be remembered that the delegate from the Swedish Missionary Council voted against the decision in consideration of the unity in the Swedish Missionary Council, some of whose members, among them the Pentecost Mission, are adverse to the World Council of Churches on grounds of principle.

The Foreign Mission Secretary of the Pentecost Mission Samuel Nyström says that in his opinion it was an unhappy decision arrived at in Ghana. While he has confidence in the International Missionary Council he ist not so sure that the World Council of Churches may be called Christian in as much as it includes "organizations which are directly hostile to evangelising activities". Also the Foreign

Mission Secretary of the Baptist Church Eric Strutz deeply deplores the decision in case it should bring about a disruption of the good collaboration of the various national missionary councils. The President of the Swedish Missionary Council Nils Dahlberg referred to his suggestion, as a delegate in Ghana, that the possibility of a more loose connection with the proposed foreign mission committee under the World Council of Churches should be left open to those national missionary councils which felt that they did not want to be "dependent" on the World Council of Churches. Also the Board of Mission of the Church of Sweden on its part emphasized that an effort should be made to prevent the international connections from breaking up the national councils.

Big Free Church "Parliament" to be Held Next Month.

Almost 1.000 representatives of the 8 free church communities that are members of the Free Church Board of Co-ordination will meet from March 11th - 13th for the first big joint free church meeting for 5 years. The "Free Church Parliament" will be a real working conference for which much material has been prepared by the various committees, and more importance will be attached to group work rather than to addresses.

The three subjects to be considered are 1) "State, Church and Free Church" under which will be discussed, amongst other things, the possibility for the free churches of making a positive contribution towards the life of the community; 2) "The New School Situation and the Free Church Youth Movement" and finally 3) "Evangelization Through Education".

Religious Instruction in Schools to be Curtailed?

The Swedish Supreme School Board has suggested to the Minister of Education that religious instruction in the first class of the 4-years' secondary school be reduced from 2 hours weekly to one. Protests against this suggestion have been forthcoming from many sides. 25 Members of the Upper House and 50 Members of the Lower House, representing all political parties except the Communist one, have declared that the proposal ought to be rejected. The Swedish Ecumenical Council has likewise sent a note of protest to the Minister of Education on behalf of the churches.

The suggestion has been advanced once before some years ago, but was met with such strong opposition that it was returned to the Supreme School Board by the Minister of Education.

News in Brief.

- The press service of the Swedish Lutheran National Church has conducted a course in advertising and journalism for clergymen and laymen from February 3rd - 7th during which the members had an opportunity at trying their hand at both journalism and advertising.

- In Gothenburg the police and the clergy have started a co-operative service at the request of the police. Three of the clergymen in the town will be on call when, for instance, relatives are to be informed of casualties in connection with traffic accidents.

- The Housing Authorities in Jönköping have refused to sanction the plan for a new church with the motivation that its outward appearance differs too greatly from the traditional Swedish style of building. The parish council and Cathedral Chapter concerned had passed the blue-prints.

- The Christian Parliamentary Group have invited to a weekly devotional service to be held on the Parliament premises and led by one of the Group members. The first devotional was held recently and was attended by app. 40 Members of Parliament.

- In a communication to the President of East Germany the National Union of Students in Sweden have protested against the sentence passed on the student pastor in Leipzig, Siegfried Schmutzler.

Corrections.

1. We regret that a paragraph in CN No. 34, page 9, could give the impression that by an Act of the Swedish Parliament women had become admitted to a lay ministry as assistant preachers. There is no intention to organize a ministry but only a more or less temporary service without any ordination. Parliament has expressed the opinion that the service as lay preachers should also be entrusted to women. That does, however, not mean any change in the traditional order that only the bishops can give the permission to preach to members of the laity.

2. Bishop Bo Giertz, Gothenburg, Sweden, has requested us to notify that his utterance which was quoted in CN No. 34, page 9, from a news paper report on a public discussion does not quite correctly express his opinion. A speaker in this discussion has maintained that the opposition against the ordination of women was a manifestation of a Roman-Catholic tendency in the Church of Sweden and that the loyalty to our Protestant heritage required that we do not accept these Roman-Catholic ways of thinking but now say yes to the proposal about the ordination of women. To this Bishop Giertz answered that the loyalty to our Protestant heritage is above all a loyalty to the Holy Scripture. To accept the ordination of women would mean to put arms into the hands of Rome. The Roman-Catholic propaganda would question our loyalty to the Bible. Such steps could make the Roman-Catholic danger a reality. - Bishop Giertz does not think that it is possible to say beforehand whether a great number of people would leave the Church of Sweden, if there will be - or continue not to be - ordination of women. The Bishop thinks that the immediate consequences in this respect probably will be small.